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# THE PEOPLES OF FRENCH INDOCHINA

*By*  
OLOV R. T. JANSE



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# THE PEOPLES OF FRENCH INDOCHINA

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(WITH 25 PLATES)

## INTRODUCTION

Indochina is the significant name of the vast peninsula projecting from the Asiatic mainland which separates the Indian Ocean and the China Sea, forming a bridge to the East Indies. It is the homeland of numerous peoples and tribes, most of which are impregnated with either Chinese or Indian culture.

The peninsula comprises, besides French Indochina, Burma in the northwest, Siam (also called Thailand) in the west-central part, and the Malay States in the south. Up to the time of the Nipponese invasion, Burma and the Malay States belonged to the British sphere of influence. Siam, though tied with strong economic bonds to the British Empire, was the only independent country on the peninsula until it recently became subjected to Japanese domination. The eastern part of the peninsula, or French Indochina, also referred to since 1887 as L'Union Indochinoise, comprises four protectorates—Tonkin, Annam, Laos, and Cambodia; one colony, Cochin-China; and the leased territory of Kwangchowan on the Luichow Peninsula, Kwangtung Province, opposite Hainan Island.

Before the confederacy became mutilated by the treaty of March 11, 1941, imposed by the Japanese, the area of French Indochina was about 285,000 square miles, thus exceeding the size of the mother country.

## GEOGRAPHY

The most striking feature of French Indochina from a geographical point of view is the extreme contrast between the wild, mostly forest-clad and sparsely inhabited mountains and the densely populated, extensively cultivated fertile lowlands.

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### PLATE 1

The temple ruins of the Bayon in Angkor Thom (the old capital of Cambodia), an impressive example of the ancient Khmer art. For eight centuries the gentle smile of the quadruple enigmatic faces, looking toward the four quarters, has welcomed pilgrims and tourists alike. The faces themselves are approximately 6 feet high. Courtesy École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

Northern and central Indochina comprises two broad belts of mountains originating in Tibet and Yunnan. One of these chains stretches in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction into the Tonkinese delta region, where queerly shaped rocks rise abruptly from the rice fields. The famous archipelago of Fatsi-long in the Bay of Along, Gulf of Tonkin, is to be considered as a continuation of this mountain range. Some peaks, as for example Fan Si Pan south of Lao-kay, rise to almost 10,000 feet above sea level. Closer to the delta region, among rolling hills, rise lower peaks such as Tam Dao and Mount Bavi, both only a few hours' drive from Hanoi.

The other main range of the Indochinese mountain regions stretches, generally speaking, from north to south from Tonkin and upper Laos toward Cambodia and eastern Cochin-China. This belt, forming the backbone of the Indochinese Alps, is called the Grande Cordillère or the Cordillère Annamitique. The slope is steep on the east side but more gradual on the west. One of the highest peaks is La Mère et l'Enfant (Mother and Child), about 6,000 feet high, near Cape Varella on the coast of the China Sea, in southern Annam. In the central part are several important high plateaus such as the Tran-ninh or the Plaine des Jarres (about 3,000 feet high) in upper Laos. Farther south are the Dar Lac and the Lang Bian plateaus. On the latter (elevation about 4,500-6,000 feet), some hours' drive from Saigon, the capital of Cochin-China, the French have established an important health resort, Dalat, among rolling hills and magnificent pine forests.

From the main north-south mountain belt several smaller ranges at right angles reach the narrow coastal plains and the China Sea, thus dividing the country, especially Annam, into numerous very distinct regions. There are several peaks overlooking the sea, such as La Porte d'Annam (The Annamite Gate) 394 feet high, notorious as a barrier in ancient times between the Annamites in the north and the Chams in the south. Farther south, between Hué, the capital of Annam, and Tourane is the Col des Nuages (Peak of the Clouds), about 1,400 feet high, serving as a climatic barrier.

The Indochinese mountains confine within their winding valleys several important rivers, such as the Claire, the Red River (Song Koi), and the Black River (Song Bo) in Tonkin, flowing in a northwesterly-southeasterly direction. The most important of the rivers, however, is the Mekong, one of the longest rivers in Southeast Asia (1,900 miles in length), which crosses the country from north to south. All these and other smaller rivers are partly navigable and are used for floating timber.

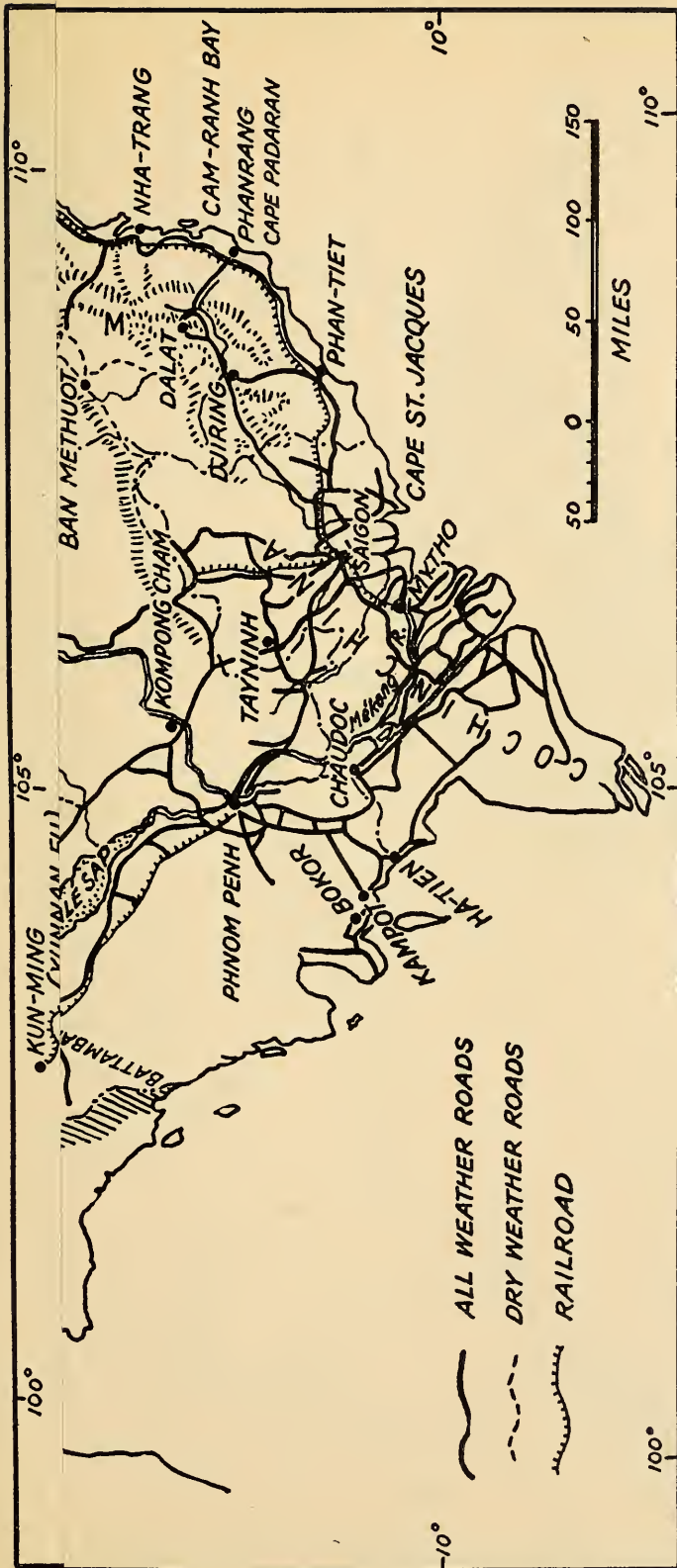


Fig. 1.—Map of Indochina.







Fig. 1.—Map of Indochina.



These rivers are chiefly responsible for the creation of the two important delta regions in Indochina, one in the north in Tonkin (13,000 square miles), the other in the south stretching over large parts of Cochin-China and Cambodia (40,000 square miles). They are connected by a slightly in-curved band of lowland stretching along the China Sea. The configuration of all these plains has been likened to a bamboo pole (the Annamite coastal regions) supporting at each end a rice basket (the deltas).

These lowlands, where rice is extensively grown, are to be considered as the real granaries of Indochina, especially of the southern region. They are carefully drained and crossed by an extensive network of canals and waterways spreading in all directions.

There are few lakes in Indochina. Only one, Tonlé Sap or Great Lake, in central Cambodia, is of interest from an economic point of view, being one of the richest fishing grounds in the world. This lake serves as a reservoir for waters of the Mekong during the rainy season, when constant rainfall raises considerably the river level. Through the rivers connecting the Mekong and Tonlé Sap the surplus water flows into the lake. When the dry season comes and the level of the Mekong is considerably lowered, Tonlé Sap is emptied by the same rivers which previously served as tributaries. Thus the streams connecting the Mekong and Tonlé Sap flow one season in one direction and the other season in the opposite direction. For a short while during the in-between seasons the waters in these rivers become stagnant. This is an occasion of important festivals, comprising boat races, presided over by the King of Cambodia. The fisheries of Tonlé Sap are a source of large income for the government as well as for the local population.

In northern Tonkin is a group of lakes, Babé, located in one of the most beautiful spots of the region.

#### CLIMATE

In spite of local variations due to differences in latitude, altitude, and exposure, the climate is intertropical, characterized by two seasons, one dry and relatively cool, the other rainy and hot. The alternation of these two seasons is chiefly a result of the monsoons or trade winds. From April or May to October the winds blow from the southwest, bringing heavy rainfall sometimes accompanied by devastating floods. During the remainder of the year the winds are reversed and bring the dry season.

In northern Indochina the "winter" season is marked by a rather large difference in temperature between day and night, particularly in the mountain region. In the Hanoi region, the average temperature of February,

the coolest month, is 62° F., but occasionally the mercury drops to about 40°. During June, the hottest month, the average temperature is about 85°, but much higher temperatures—up to about 110°—have been registered.

In southern Indochina the differences of temperature between seasons and between day and night are less marked than in the north. In central Cambodia the average temperature in April, the hottest month, is 85°. From November to March the average temperature varies within a narrow range—from 79° to 83°.

During the rainy season parts of the country, especially the coast of Annam, are periodically devastated by violent typhoons, generally originating east of the Philippines. The most critical months are August and September. The violence of the tempest sometimes produces an enormous tidal wave.

#### HYGIENE

During the initial stage of the French intervention health conditions in Indochina were poor owing largely to ignorance and lack of adequate housing and clothing. Since then public hygiene has improved considerably, thanks to the efforts made by the French authorities, especially since 1885. In 1904 the Government General set up an organization to provide medical care for the local population, in which at present 400 French and 80 auxiliary native physicians are employed. In 1937 6,000,000 natives were given medical examination in the hospitals or dispensaries, and 300,000 individuals received hospitalization free of charge. As a result the birth rate is steadily mounting. In northern Indochina there is an annual excess of births over deaths of approximately 100,000. There are several public and private welfare organizations which are concerned especially with the protection of orphans, with combating social diseases, and alleviating misery. In 1936 there were in the confederacy 29 general hospitals, 105 medical centers, and about 350 dispensaries or medical posts. Thus definite efforts have been and are still being made to provide better sanitation and to combat the common diseases of these intertropical areas such as malaria, dysentery, etc.

Several excellent hill stations and seaside resorts have been established in recent years, where the invigorating air makes it possible for visitors to avoid the conditions of anemia and general fatigue which often result from a prolonged sojourn in the hot and humid delta regions. The best known of the hill stations are Chapa (4,500 feet) in upper Tonkin, near the Yunnan border; Tam Dao (3,000 feet) and Mount Bavi, both in the vicinity of Hanoi; Bana (4,500 feet) about 18 miles southeast of Tourane



in central Annam; Dalat (4,500 feet) in southern Annam; and Bokor (4,500 feet) in southern Cambodia. Among the seaside resorts, where the breezes from the sea bring a certain relief from the heat, are Vat-chai in the Bay of Along, and Do-son, 13 miles from Hai-phong. Sam-son, 10 miles from the town of Thanh-hoa; Cua-tung, 28 miles from Quang-tri; Thuan-an, near Hué; Cua-lo, 12 miles from Vinh; Ky-xuyên near Quang-ngai; and Nha-trang, all located along the Annamite coast. Other seaside resorts have been established at Cape St. Jacques, 58 miles from Bien-hoa in Cochin-China, at the mouth of the Saigon River; and finally Kep, 17 miles from Kampot in southern Cambodia.

In the principal urban centers such as Saigon, Dalat, and Hanoi, the drinking water is filtered and regularly analyzed by the medical authorities, but it is nevertheless recommended that all water used for drinking be boiled.

#### NATURAL RESOURCES

The natural resources of Indochina are very considerable but so far have not been extensively exploited. The soil is particularly fertile, and from remote times agriculture has been the chief concern of the natives, who are primarily dependent upon rice growing. The greatest areas of agricultural land are located in the vast delta regions of the Red River in Tonkin and of the Mekong in Cochin-China and Cambodia. The French have encouraged the natives to develop the growing of numerous other crops such as maize, various starchy plants, vegetables, tea, and tobacco, as well as several textile-producing crops such as jute, ramie, and cotton. The establishment of extensive coffee and rubber plantations has proved to be very successful. In recent years orange trees have been introduced into Indochina.

In spite of extensive deforestation carried out by some of the nomadic tribes (cf. p. 25), nearly two-fifths of the whole area of Indochina is covered by forests. Before the arrival of the French, the local administration paid little or no attention to the preservation or methodical exploitation of the forests. A Forestry Service organized by the Government General in recent years has made it possible to utilize and protect effectively this source of wealth. A great variety of trees, such as the teak, lim yao, cam-lai, cam-xe, and bamboo furnish lumber for construction, boat building, furniture making, etc. Various byproducts of the forests, such as turpentine, lacquer, camphor, indigo, ginger, and cinnamon, play an important part in the domestic economy.

The mineral resources of the country are equally important and have long been exploited by the Chinese, though in a primitive way. In recent

years, especially since 1920, a large-scale mining industry has been developed by French firms. In 1929 the value of mined products totaled 18,610,000 piastres.<sup>1</sup> Next to rice, the mining industry is the most important source of income from exports. The principal products are coal, 77 percent; tin, 10 percent; and zinc, 9.5 percent. Of particular importance are the coal mines in the Đông-triều and Hongay areas in north-eastern Tonkin. Secondary though valuable products are lead, tungsten, copper, iron, gold, phosphates, graphite, and cement.

The waters along the Indochina coasts, the flooded rice fields, most of the streams, and the Great Lake (Tonlé Sap) in Cambodia abound with fish of many species, as well as shrimps and other crustaceans. They are caught in great quantity and used partly for domestic consumption, partly for export, especially to Singapore and Hong Kong. The fish are either consumed fresh or are salted and dried. In the countries inhabited by the Annamites a considerable part of the catch is converted into a vitamin-rich "fish sauce" called *ngoc-mam*, used as a seasoning. The fishing industry and trade have been to a great extent in the hands of the Chinese settlers in Indochina. The collecting of marine salt and water plants (*nénuphars*) is also of great importance in the domestic economy.

Cattle breeding is of lesser importance. The most common and most valuable domestic animal is the strong but lazy water buffalo, indispensable to the farmer. The buffalo is used chiefly to prepare the rice fields, but the meat is widely used as food by the natives. Other domestic animals are hogs, ponies, and fowl. The French have introduced sheep and goats, but their number is restricted. Milk and milk products play no part whatever in the native nutrition.

#### TRANSPORTATION AND HARBORS

Before the arrival of the French, most of the traffic in Indochina was borne on the numerous waterways (rivers and canals) and on trails chiefly fit only for foot or equestrian travel. These means of travel have since been considerably improved, with many of the trails transformed into excellent highways. At the outbreak of the war there had been built more than 18,000 miles of highways, penetrating even into the most isolated regions, which were used by some 20,000 automobiles. In addition the French constructed 2,090 miles of railways. Many of the canals have been enlarged and lengthened. Coastal navigation has been made safer by the establishment of several radio stations and meteorological observa-

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<sup>1</sup> In 1929 the rate of exchange was about 45 cents to the piastre.



## PLATE 2

Upper: Aerial view of the Do-son beach in the Kien-an district, eastern Tonkin, a famous summer resort. The picture is taken at low tide. At the left (the dark area above the center) is Do-hai village, one of the most important fishing centers in Tonkin.

Lower: Cape Varella, Khanh-hoa Province, on the Annamite "Riviera." The Mandarin Route—the macadamized highway connecting Saigon and Hanoi—passes here along the scenic coast.

Courtesy National Geographic Society.







PLATE 3

Upper: A typical street, lined with small, balconied houses, in Nam-dinh, southern Tonkin. The Annamite towns are reminiscent of those in southern China.

Lower: Aerial view of Annamite settlements, circular in shape and bordering low limestone hills projecting out of the rice fields. Dong-mai in the Đông-triều district, eastern Tonkin.

Courtesy National Geographic Society.







#### PLATE 4

Upper: Floating houses on the Black River at Hoa-binh, upper Tonkin, a center of the Muong tribes. The rowboat (at the right) is made in basketwork. A coating of tar makes this light craft watertight. Photograph by the author.

Lower: The calm waters of the Babé. Lakes in the picturesque surroundings of steep green mountains. Bac-kan Province, upper Tonkin. Courtesy National Geographic Society.





# PLATE 5

Upper: The sugar palm (*Borassus*) characterizes the monotonous Cambodian plain. It plays a most important part in the domestic economy. The trunk provides lattices and beams used for house construction, the leaves are used as roofing material, and the stalks for making fibers and ropes. Finally, the abundant sap produces an excellent sugar called "skar." Region of Pnom-penh.

Lower: The Pong-gour waterfall (measuring about 100 feet in height) near Dalat, southern Annam, the Niagara of Indochina.

Photographs by the author.





tories, which send out storm and typhoon warnings. Some of the more important urban centers are connected with airlines, and the more populous districts are provided with tramways and bus lines.

Along the extensive coast line of Indochina there are numerous small, sheltered harbors suitable for junks and coastwise traders, but only a few first-class ports. The most important is Saigon, in Cochín-China, which in rank is comparable with Bordeaux in France. The main port of northern Indochina is Hai-phong, about 50 miles east of Hanoi. Other harbors are Hongay Bay (or Port Courbet), especially used for the shipping of coal from the mines of the nearby Đông-triều district in Tonkin; Binh-thuy, near Vinh in northern Annam; Tourane, near Hué in central Annam; and Quinhon in southern Annam. The large Cam-ranh Bay between Cape Varella and Cape Padaran, which once sheltered the entire Russian Baltic fleet, has great possibilities if adequately equipped.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### THE DAWN

Around the beginning of the Christian Era Chinese and Indian cultures were introduced into the Indochinese peninsula. The impact of the Chinese civilization affected strongly the peoples in eastern Tonkin and in northern Annam, especially the province of Thanh-hoa. The Indian civilization spread rapidly over the southern portions of the country, above all affecting southern Annam, where the Cham civilization originated (cf. p. 15), and over Cambodia, the birthplace of the Khmer civilization (cf. p. 14).

The Chinese extended their political domination over the peoples of northern Indochina—chiefly Annamites—up to about A.D. 1000, when national dynasties began to rule the country. Most important of these dynasties were the Lê, Lý, and Tr'ãn. Subsequently, for a short period, the Chinese managed to take over political control, but during the last millennium their influence has been chiefly of a cultural character, up to the establishment of the French protectorate in 1883-84. The civilization of the Celestial Empire, before it became stagnant, was most beneficial to the local population, which rapidly adopted Chinese customs and administrative systems.

Once the Annamites had gained their independence and been able to organize themselves on a Chinese pattern, they started gradually their own move southward, overrunning first the once mighty kingdom of Champa in southern Annam, which was defeated in 1471. This victory permitted

the Annamites to invade and occupy the coast of the present southern Annam and portions of Cochin-China. Here they came in contact with the ancestors of the Cambodians, the Khmers, who now suffered from the repeated aggressions of their enterprising northern neighbors. The history of the Annamites is made up chiefly of dynastic rivalries and wars with their neighbors. The present King of Annam, Bao Dai, belongs to the Nguyễn family.

The Chams (cf. p. 15), who played an important part in the ancient history of Indochina, once ruled over a country stretching along the coast of Annam from the region of the Gate of Annam (La Porte d'Annam) in the north to Cape Ba-kê (province of Binh Thuan) in the south.

By the second century A.D. they had established a state in the region of Nha-trang. The first report of Champa and its fabulous wealth reached Europe through Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler who possibly visited the country at the end of the thirteenth century. Shortly afterward, under the repeated blows of the Annamites, the Cham civilization collapsed and sank into oblivion until a group of French scholars brought to light and studied a great many ancient Cham monuments, eloquent witnesses of a glorious past. The political history of Champa is largely a succession of wars against the Chinese, the Annamites, and the Khmers. For some time the Indonesian Jarai and Radhé tribes in Annam were subjected to the domination of the Chams (cf. p. 26).

The origins and earliest history of the gifted Khmers are little known. Their kingdom, which once extended not only over the present Cambodia, but also over other neighboring areas, was preceded by a state called Founan, the existence of which is chiefly known to us through some old Chinese documents. In the first centuries of the Christian Era this state dominated the area around the lower Mekong. It still existed in the middle of the sixth century but some time later was succeeded by the Khmer kingdom.

The civilization of Founan developed under strong Indian influence, and the cultural monuments of the country were highly praised for their artistic value. Unfortunately, only a few documents pertaining to Founan or its civilization have been preserved up to modern times. We are much better informed about the Khmers, whose rulers were Hinduized, if not of Indian blood. Sanskrit was the court language, and the ceremonials recalled those of ancient India. Brahmanism was the prevalent religion, but Buddhism had also its devotees. The impressive ruins of Angkor and other localities in Cambodia are silent testimonials to the high development of the local art, inspired by Indian sources. This famous art



flourished from the ninth to the thirteenth century, when the Siamese started their conquest of the country and brought death and destruction to the Khmer civilization.

#### EARLIEST EUROPEAN CONTACTS AND THE MODERN PERIOD

As previously mentioned, the first knowledge of Indochina to reach the western world came from Marco Polo, who returned to Europe about 1295, after a long sojourn in East Asia. Later, in the middle of the sixteenth century, several missionaries and traders—Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, French, and English—arrived in Indochina. One of the best known of these pioneers was a French Jesuit, Alexandre de Rhodes, who completed and improved the *quốc ngữ*, the transcription of the Annamite language in the romanized characters commonly used today. He also initiated negotiations in Rome resulting in the creation of the "Société des Missions étrangères," which has played an important part in the conversion of the natives to Christianity; Christianized natives at present number between a million and a million and a half. Another famous pioneer was Pierre Poivre, who traveled extensively over Indochina and other countries in Southeast Asia in the eighteenth century as a representative of La Compagnie des Indes.

It is not easy to describe briefly the events which led to the establishment of French rule over the Indochinese Union, created in 1887, but the principal developments may be summarized as follows:

Until about 1800, Annam, Tonkin, and Cochin-China, mainly inhabited by Annamites, and to a lesser extent Laos, inhabited chiefly by Laotians, were ruled by the court of Hué (Annam). Bloody struggles between rival dynasties filled the history of the countries until Nguyễn-An, under the name of Gia-Long, mounted the Annamite throne, supported by the French under the leadership of Pigneau de Béhaine, Bishop of Adran. As a result of this support, Gia-Long (1802-1820) granted France certain trading facilities in the country and the right to conduct missionary work among the local populations. Gia-Long kept faithfully the agreement he had reached with the French, but his successors failed to live up to its terms, instigating an antiforeign policy and encouraging cruel persecutions of the Christians, actions which resulted in repeated warnings from the French and the Spanish. Finally these two countries decided to send an expeditionary force under Admiral Rigault de Genouilly to Indochina in 1858 to bring pressure upon the court of Hué. Tourane, in central Annam, the port of Hué, was shelled and Saigon occupied. As a consequence of this intervention, a treaty was signed in Saigon in 1862

by which the King of Annam ceded to France a part of Cochin-China. Tourane and a few other ports were opened to French trade.

In 1867 the French occupied the whole of Cochin-China, and by several treaties concluded in 1883-84, between the French, the King of Annam, and the Chinese Government, the French protectorates of Tonkin and Annam were officially recognized. Thus all the countries inhabited chiefly by the Annamites were placed under French suzerainty.

Meanwhile, King Norodom of Cambodia (1860-1904) had accepted a French protectorate in 1863, thus escaping both Siamese overlordship and Annamite threats of domination. In 1907 Siam ceded to Cambodia the three western provinces of Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem-reap, where the famous temple ruins of Angkor are located.

In 1887 Cambodia, together with Cochin-China, Annam, and Tonkin, were politically grouped into a confederacy, l'Union Indochinoise, ruled by a French Governor General, responsible to the Ministry of Colonies (later Ministry of Overseas France).

In 1893 Laos—divided into several principalities, the kingdom of Luang Prabang being the most important—joined the confederacy. Previously Laos, like Cambodia, had been disputed between the Annamites and the Siamese.

Finally in 1899 the Chinese Kwangchow territory on the Luichow Peninsula, opposite Hainan Island, was leased to France for a period of 99 years and placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor General of Indochina.

During the initial stage of French intervention, Indochina was ruled by the Ministry of the Marine. All governors were admirals, and this period, which lasted until 1879, when Le Myre de Vilers was appointed the first civil governor, is referred to as the "Rule of the Admirals." During this period the authorities were chiefly concerned with the pacification of the country. As a logical result of the development of democratic principles in the mother country, a policy of rapprochement and gradual emancipation of the local population has since been pursued by the French civil administration, endeavoring to establish an adequate educational system adapted to the needs of the local population (before the outbreak of the war there were more than half a million pupils in primary and secondary schools), and to grant the natives a greater share in the administration. Increasing respect was paid to local customs, laws, and traditional forms of local self-government. Among the foremost Governors General whose contributions have been particularly remarkable in furthering the general development of the confederacy, the following names should be



# PLATE 6

Upper: Harrowing the flooded rice fields in the lowland of northern Indochina, the cradle of the Annamite people. In the background are seen the first humps of the Cordillière Annamitique. Thanh-hoa, northern Annam. Photograph by the author.

Lower: In upper Laos the heavy teak logs floated down the rivers are pulled out on the rocks by trained elephants. Courtesy National Geographic Society.







PLATE 7

Upper: The sheltered harbor of a small fishing village in its verdant setting of tropical vegetation. In the background are seen sand dunes. Cua-tung, central Annam.

Lower: Annamite fishing craft in the scenic Fatsi-long, Bay of Along, Tonkin.

Photographs by the author.





PLATE 8

Upper: The palace of the Governor General in Hanoi, Tonkin, an example of modern French architecture. Courtesy National Geographic Society.

Lower: The rugged mountains surrounding the Dong-van military post in upper Tonkin, near the China border in the homeland of the Man and the Meo tribes. Photograph by the author.





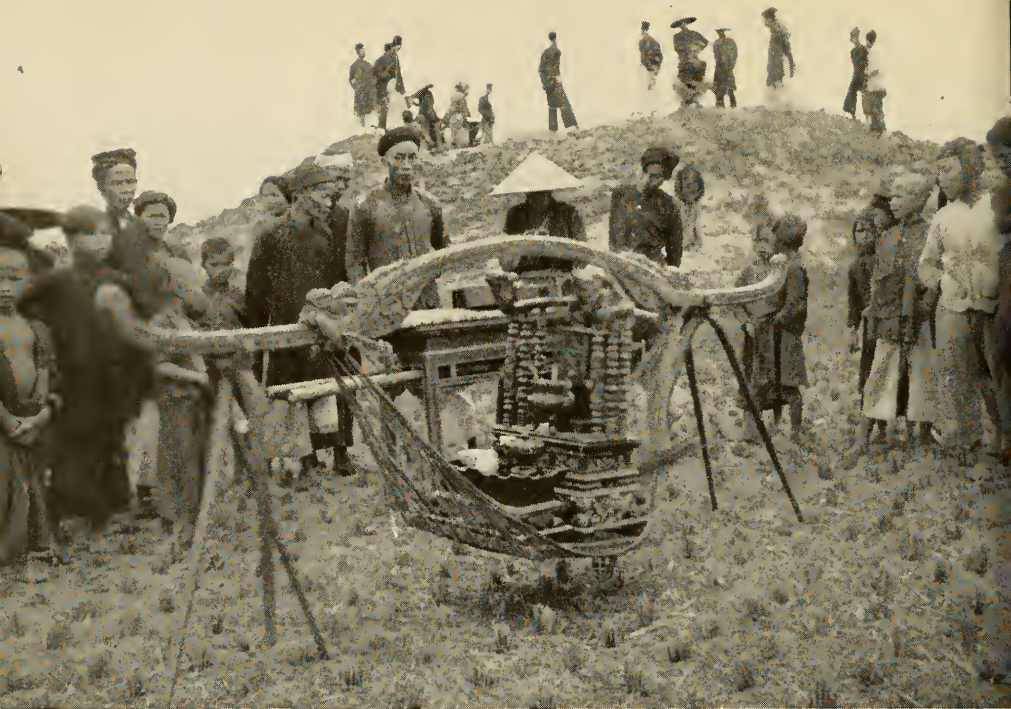


PLATE 9

Burial mounds from the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) are the oldest tangible traces of Chinese settlements in northern Indochina. Before excavations of these monuments can be carried out, it is sometimes necessary to hire local sorcerers to perform ceremonies to propitiate the dreaded spirits believed to have chosen the mound as their abode. The picture above shows the sacred paraphernalia being brought to such a mound. Below, local Annamite officials staging a display of banners and umbrellas in honor of the Governor General, who attended the excavations. Both monuments, located in Thanh-hoa Province, were excavated by the author in 1937. Photographs by the author.



mentioned: Paul Doumer (1897-1902), Albert Sarraut (1911-1914, 1917-1919), and Pierre Pasquier (1928-1934). The present Governor General Vice Admiral Jean Decoux, appointed in 1940, has so far (1944) managed to prevent the Japanese from taking over the control of the confederacy, in spite of terrible odds.

## PEOPLES

The striking contrasts of the country—the configuration of the land with its plains and mountains, the heat and cold, the alternation of dry and rainy seasons—correspond to the extreme variety of ethnic groups. Though many of these groups still stubbornly cling to their beliefs and ancient customs, the French penetration, which, as mentioned, started in the fifties of the last century, has largely contributed to the leveling of the various social and racial barriers and to orienting the elite of these peoples toward human progress.

Today the French number approximately 45,000 people, most of whom are civil and military officials. A great many, however, belong to the professional class, and others are planters, or owners or managers of mines and industrial plants.

It is very difficult to find a basis for a logical division of the local peoples of French Indochina. From a purely scientific point of view, the attempt made by Henri Maspero to classify them according to language is probably the most satisfactory thus far made. This classification is, however, somewhat artificial, besides requiring a familiarity with philologic terminology, and we therefore prefer for practical reasons to deal with the peoples in Indochina chiefly according to their numerical or cultural importance. Thus we are able to distinguish two main groups: (1) the more developed peoples of the plains and the Mekong valley, and (2) the less developed mountain tribes.

## PEOPLES OF THE PLAINS AND THE MEKONG VALLEY

### ANNAMITES

The numerically most important people not only in this group, but in the whole of Indochina, are the Annamites, also referred to as Annamese, living in the lowlands of Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-China, numbering approximately 17,000,000 souls, or nearly three-fourths of the total population of French Indochina (24,000,000).

The Annamites of today are culturally and physically closely related to the Chinese, and it has been surmised that the former before historic

times immigrated to Tonkin from China. This theory, however, seems to have little or no real foundation. To judge from ancient written Chinese records, as well as from the results of recent archeological and anthropological research, it is more likely that the Annamite group originated and developed in northern Indochina (Tonkin and northern Annam) from an amalgamation of Chinese, other Mongolic invaders (Thai or Muong?), and the local population, possibly Indonesians (cf. p. 25). This development undoubtedly took place at the very beginning of the Christian Era.

The Annamite is generally of small stature (average height, 5 ft. 2 in.), but well proportioned, and brachycephalic (index 82.2). He has prominent cheek bones, slanting eyes, straight, black hair and sparse beard. Owing to climatic and other conditions, the Annamites in Tonkin have become differentiated from their kinsmen in the south. The northern type is stouter and more energetic than his southern brethren, who often are rather delicate and somewhat effeminate. The northern and southern types also differ in dress. North of the Gate of Annam (La Porte d'Annam), men and women generally wear brown-colored clothing and the women wrap the hair in turbans, while in the south the dress is more colorful, the women wearing tunics in bright colors and using a sheer silk scarf as headgear. The region of Hué, the capital of Annam, is reputed for the beauty and grace of its women, as well as their aptitude for the fine arts, music, and poetry.

It is difficult to classify with certainty the Annamite language in any of the great philologic categories established for the Indochinese peoples. As a matter of fact, the structure of the syntax is of Thai character, but the vocabulary seems to be partly of the Môn-Khmer family. In addition, about one-third of the vocabulary is of Chinese origin (words pertaining to administration, religion, philosophy, place names, etc.), which is understandable because of the profound Chinese influence in the country for two millenniums.

In his behavior, the average Annamite is reserved, ceremonious, and cautious. He is generally capable of great self-control, and though, as a rule, he does not ostentatiously express his feelings, he judges severely those who antagonize him, especially by vulgar or brutal manners, is prone to catch and capitalize the ridiculous, and has a certain sense of humor. Temperamental persons are thoroughly disliked.

The Annamite is exceedingly frugal. His food consists mainly of rice, some vegetables, a little fish, and a seasoning called *ngoc-mam*, a "fish sauce" rich in vitamins and calories. On more festive occasions, he may add



some meat such as pork or duck to his menu. He is very seldom seen drunk, is not a great smoker, but enjoys chewing the betel nut with lime. In some of the overcrowded areas, as, for example, in the delta of Tonkin, a considerable proportion of the local population suffers periodically from undernourishment.

As with the Chinese, group interests are important among the Annamites, and the family system, based on filial piety and ancestor worship, is strongly established. The political and moral concepts of Confucius have penetrated the social organization.

The basic popular unit of government is the commune or rural center, governed by an oligarchy of notables, based on the triple standard of age, wealth, and knowledge. The French administration has respected and preserved this local government.

The religion of the Annamites is a mixture of nature worship or animism (resulting in ancestor worship), of Taoism and Buddhism, the latter belonging to the so-called Greater Vehicle or Mahayana sect which came by way of China.

The Annamites converted to Christianity form a very important minority of more than a million people, most of them being Roman Catholics. They are most numerous in southern Tonkin, northern Annam, and in the Saigon region. The activities of the French missionaries have been of great benefit to the Annamites, as well as to other natives, especially in the field of education. They have also contributed to the development of agriculture, and their social work deserves much praise.

A peculiar religious movement is Caodaism, with important ramifications also among the Cambodians. The sect was founded around 1924, obviously on Japanese instigation, and has served as a means of control of the masses. From a humble beginning, the sect gained ground rapidly and counted at the outbreak of the war about a million adherents. Caodaism professes to strive for closer relationship between Christians, Buddhists, Confucianists, Taoists, and nature worshipers, but its real aim is to serve as a tool for Japanese political penetration into Indochina, especially in Annamite countries. This politico-religious movement must be regarded as an evidence of the Japanese attempt to dominate the mind of the peoples of East Asia. The ultimate goal of this policy is to bring various religious sects together into a few large groups (or "Internationales") under the supreme leadership of the god-emperor.

At least 80 percent of the Annamites earn their livelihood as peasants and fishermen. The officials, belonging to the highly hierarchic Mandarinat, are today considerably Gallicized. Among the officials, especially



those more closely connected with the court of Hué, capital of Annam, a great many are remarkable for their learning and ability. In addition to the above classes, there is a relatively small, but nevertheless rather influential, middle class made up of landowners, small merchants, and intellectuals.

#### CAMBODIANS

From both the political and cultural point of view, the Cambodians, who number about 3,000,000, form the most important group after the Annamites. They live in the lower Mekong valley, principally in Cambodia. There are, in addition, small minorities in western Siam and in eastern Cochin-China.

The origin of the Cambodians is not exactly known, but it is generally assumed that they are the descendants of the Khmers, who made their country and their civilization famous through their impressive buildings of religious character, a great many of which have been preserved to the present time, for example, the Angkor group, well known to all those who have visited East Asia.

From a linguistic point of view, the Cambodians are classified as belonging to the Môn-Khmer group, but from a physical point of view they are, at least to a certain extent, mixed with Thai and Chinese. In addition, there may also be a certain mixture of Hindu and Malay blood.

The Cambodian is generally relatively tall (average height, 5 ft., 5 in.) and of vigorous constitution. He is subbrachycephalic (index 83.6) and has a brown skin of various shades from light to dark. The nose is large with the bridge often almost lacking, and the eyes are generally not slanting. Men and women have the hair cut so that it stands up like the bristles of a brush. The Buddhist priests and monks, however, have their heads shaved.

The Cambodians dress in a picturesque way, using bright-colored textiles. The numerous priests or monks, often seen walking in files on the roads, are wrapped in a lemon-yellow togalike cloak. The most typical garment of both sexes is the *sampot*, a brightly colored strip of cotton or silk tucked around the waist with the lower end brought up between the legs and fastened to the belt in front. The upper part of the body is covered by a tight-fitting jacket or tunic, buttoned in the front. Sometimes the women use, instead of a jacket, a strip of cloth or a scarf.

The Cambodians live in houses built on high stilts, or in floating houses anchored along the rivers or on the periodically flooded plains.



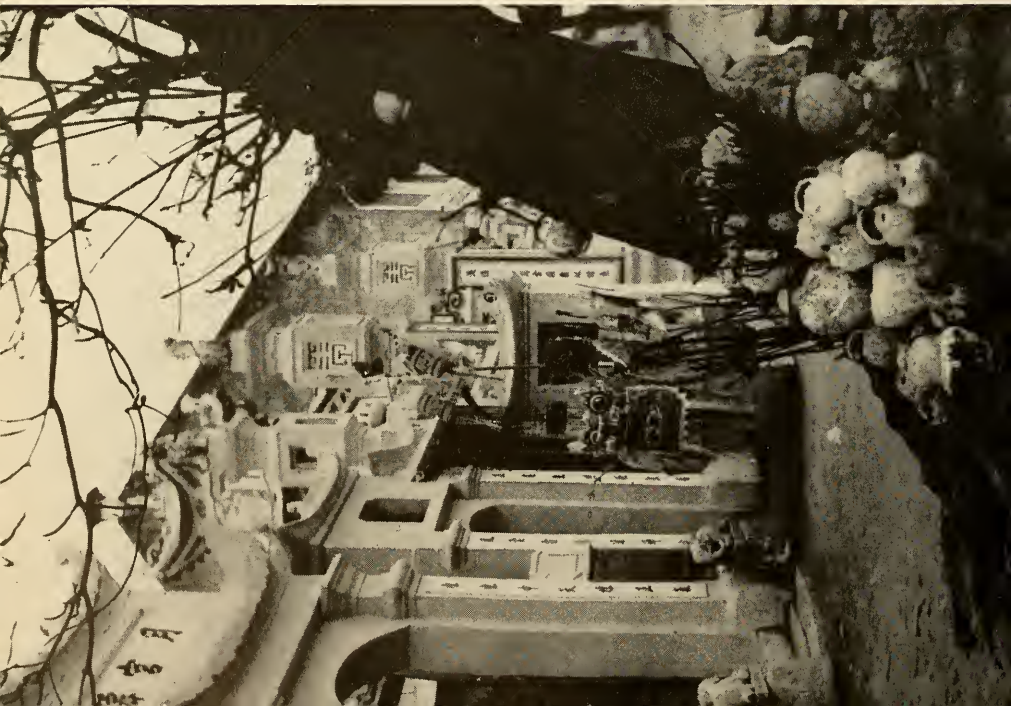
#### PLATE 10

Upper: The Buddhist stupa on the sacred mound in the center of Phnom-Penh, the capital of Cambodia. The space surrounding this monument has been converted by the French into an attractive park. Photograph by the author.

Lower: A typical Buddhist monastery in Luang Prabang, upper Laos, the "Vat Xien Ten," rebuilt in 1561 by King Jettah. Courtesy National Geographic Society.







# PLATE 11

Left: An Annamite shrine in the town of Thanh-hoa, northern Annam. In the foreground, a sacred tree with offerings of lime pots, believed to be "animated." The latter are respectfully referred to by the natives as "Sir Lime Pot." In the background, a multi-colored dragon made of paper.

Right: The Annamite Mot-cot or single-pillar shrine in Hanoi, Tonkin, in recent years saved from destruction and restored under the auspices of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient.

Photographs by the author.

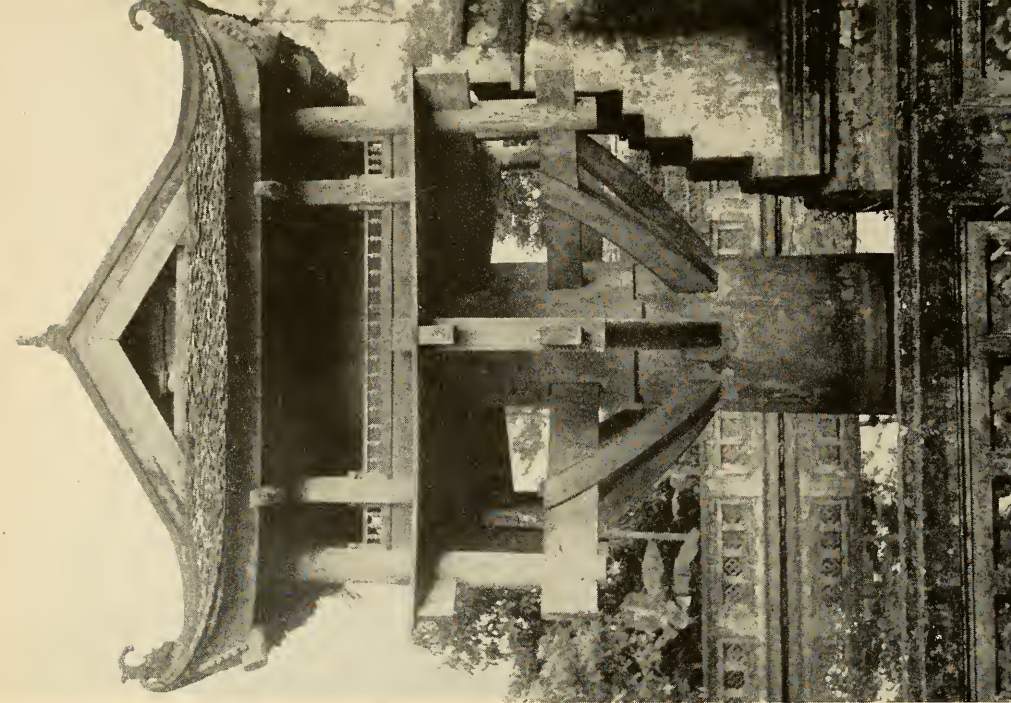






PLATE 12

Upper: The decorative gate of a famous Annamite shrine built on an islet in a pond ("Le petit lac") in Hanoi, capital of Tonkin.

Lower: Annamite fortune tellers at the Sacred Fish or Phu-cat shrine (Pagode des Poissons sacrés) in Thanh-hoa Province.

Photographs by the author.







PLATE 13

Upper: An Annamite shrine at Mat-son in the district of Dong-son, Thanh-hoa Province, northern Annam. An altar, supporting incense burners, screens the entrance (to prevent evil spirits lurking around in the air from intruding). To the left, stone statues representing guardians.

Lower: A close-up of the guardians of the shrine.

Photographs by the author.



They are open-hearted, friendly, and hospitable, and show a fatalistic indolence, matched by a profound religious sentiment. The way of living of the peasants and fishermen is generally simple and severe. Their food consists principally of rice, vegetables, fish, fruit, and coconut milk.

The Cambodians are devout Buddhists and belong, like the Siamese, to the Hinayana or Lesser Vehicle sect.

The monastery, where most of the Cambodians pass a part of their lives either for study or meditation, plays a very important part in the life of the common people and forms the center of their social activities. The Institut Buddhique in Pnom-Penh (the capital of Cambodia), created by the French, has greatly improved the moral standard of the priests and monks and has preserved ancient sacred documents. The Institut has also brought together, with the cooperation of natives, an important collection of cult objects.

In bygone days the Khmer or Cambodian Kingdom covered a greater territory than at present (cf. p. 8), but during the last centuries, when the political strength of the country declined gradually under repeated blows by the Siamese, Thai, and Annamites, they were forced to give up piecemeal rich sections of their territory. Without the French intervention in 1863, Cambodia would probably have disappeared from the map as a political entity and been absorbed by its neighbors.

#### CHAMS<sup>2</sup>

Today there are scattered in southern Annam, Cochin-China, and Cambodia the remnants of the once mighty Cham people, which in the past ruled over southern and central Annam and a part of Cochin-China. Altogether they number a little more than 100,000 people, most of them (approximately 76,000) living in the province of Phan-tiet in southern Annam.

The language of the Chams is of the "Malayo-Polynesian" family, but somewhat altered by the Môn-Khmer. Their civilization was and is still strongly impregnated by Indian elements.

Physically the men are not very strong, though sometimes they are of a rather stout physique. They are brown-skinned, of medium stature, and have a broad nose, eyes that are not slanting, and straight or slightly wavy hair. The women wear the hair flowing in complete disorder, never combed.

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<sup>2</sup> Though the Chams at present are not very important from a numerical point of view, they are treated here at some length because of the eminent part they have played in the past.



The men have generally adapted for ordinary use the Annamite dress (except the Muslims, cf. below). The women wear a green tunic with tight-fitting sleeves, a necklace of glass beads and sometimes ear pendants, each ending in a long red tassel. As a headgear they sometimes use a sheer silk scarf. People of both sexes give a lamentable impression of filth and neglect.

The Chams generally earn their livelihood as farmers. The main crops are rice, maize, tobacco, cotton, and vegetable oil, or *arachide*. They keep a few buffaloes, goats, chickens, and ducks. The food consists chiefly of rice, fish, and game. They do not eat beef, pork, or eggs.

The Chams live in villages and hamlets surrounded by wooden fences, and the houses, provided with thatched roofs, are built directly on the soil. The aspect of the community is always barren and desolate in the extreme, because all vegetation has been purposely destroyed (for religious reasons).

The social organization is based on the matriarchate, and the women play an important part especially in the religious ceremonies. They do heavy work, both in the field and in the household, and are often seen carrying heavy loads on their heads.

From the religious point of view, the Chams are now divided into two groups, one professing Brahmanistic beliefs, the other converted to Mohammedanism. In both cases the belief is altered by numerous local superstitions. The Brahmanists, called Kafirs (infidels), worship various deities, one of the most venerated being Po-Yang Inö Nagar, Cham equivalent of the Indian goddess Bhagavatī, spouse of Siva. Po-Yang Inö Nagar has her temple at Nha-trang in southern Annam.

The Muslims, called Bani (the sons of the religion), read the Koran, without, however, understanding the text. They do not observe the ritual ablutions. Their religion is considerably altered, and the name of Allah has become Po Oulah.

As previously mentioned (p. 8), the Chams once played a very important part in the history of the peninsula. Impressive temple ruins crowning the hilltops, as well as numerous statues and other monuments found in and around these ruins, are eloquent testimony of the vanished glory of the Chams. In recent years the French School of the Far East (École Française d'Extrême-Orient) has cleared, methodically excavated, and preserved a great many of these ruins, the most important groups of which are located in Quangnam Province, at Tra-kieu, a locality presumably to be identified with Simhapura, the oldest Cham capital; the Sivaite town of My Son and the important Dong Duong group, the latter possibly corresponding to the Buddhistic town of Indra-pura (ninth century A.D.).

After having reached its peak around A.D. 1000, the Cham civilization started its gradual decline a few centuries later. Finally, during the seventeenth century, under the repeated onslaughts of their dynamic neighbors, the Annamites, the Chams became enslaved, slaughtered, or scattered.

#### LAOTIANS

The Laotians, who are of Thai stock, like the Siamese, are scattered in the Mekong valley, from the border region of Yunnan in the north to the frontier of Cambodia in the south. The country is geographically divided into definite regions, a natural factor which has favored a political particularism and given rise to independent native states, the most important of which is the kingdom of Luang Prabang.

The Laotians number today around 600,000 people. As mentioned, their country became a French protectorate in 1893.

The Laotians are generally of small stature (average height, 5 ft. 2½ in.). They are subbrachycephalic (index 83.6), and are brown-skinned, with broad noses, straight hair, and eyes not slanting. They are of pleasant appearance and are known to be friendly, open-hearted, and very hospitable.

The men's dress consists of wide trousers, a long jacket, and a scarf of blue cotton. The women wear a striated colorful skirt called a *sin*. The chest is covered by a scarf wrapped around the shoulders. The hair is arranged in a bun.

The life of the Laotians is rather easy. The climate and soil produce, with little exertion on their part, enough rice and game, and plenty of fruit such as bananas, mangos, litchis, and coconuts. The houses, made of bamboo and provided with thatched roofs, are built on high piles. Brick construction is reserved for divinities and the saints, and for the king and some of the higher officials.

The Laotians are Buddhist, but their Buddhism is altered by various local superstitions. They have numerous taboos, and dreaded spirits called *phi* are believed to be present almost everywhere.

#### CHINESE

The Chinese form an economically very influential minority in spite of the fact that they have never been very numerous in the confederacy. They number at present between 400,000 and 500,000, most of them coming from the region of Canton and Fukien Province and politically tied to the southern faction of the Kuo-min-tang. They are scattered all over Indochina, but the most important centers are Cholon (a suburb of Saigon), and the Hanoi and Pnom-Penh areas (cf. p. 18).



The Chinese influence goes back almost to the beginning of the Christian Era. They began to settle in Tonkin and northern Annam as early as the third century B.C. Until the year 1000 Tonkin and the major part of Annam were considered to be a part of a "colonial" China. Even after the Annamites gained a relative independence at that time, the country still remained economically and culturally closely tied to the Celestial Empire.

The present Chinese population is composed mainly of immigrants or descendants of immigrants who arrived during the last few centuries. In 1680 Chinese officers and several thousand men, supporters of the Ming dynasty which had just been overthrown by the Manchu dynasty, arrived in Indochina and settled in the Mytho region in Cochin-China. Later, in the eighteenth century, other important groups arrived and settled in the Ha-tien region of Cochin-China. Since that time there has been a steady flow of Chinese newcomers, mainly men, many of whom have married native women. At the outbreak of the Japanese war against China, a great many Celestials, especially of the wealthier classes, took refuge in Tonkin and elsewhere in Indochina. It is possible that most of these by now have returned to unoccupied China.

Favored by the peace and order the French have achieved, the Chinese within the confederacy have been able to develop their well-known qualities as merchants. Thus, for example, until the Japanese invasion a considerable proportion of the rice mills and the rice trade was controlled by the Chinese. They also dominated to a certain extent river navigation in Cochin-China, the fish trade, and the hide business. Numerous grocery stores were and are probably still owned and operated by the Chinese.

All Chinese in Indochina are supposed to belong to a guild or congregation (Annamite: *bang*), having as head a *bang truong* directly responsible for the behavior of his countrymen to the communal authorities.

It has been a matter of dispute among the French whether the Chinese immigration should be curtailed or encouraged. In spite of the fact that the less astute Annamites resent the Chinese competition, and notwithstanding the criticism of various activities considered to be prejudicial to French and native interests, it should be admitted that the Chinese as a whole have exercised a beneficial influence upon the economic development of Indochina and have proved on many occasions to be valuable as intermediaries between the French and the natives.

In addition to the pure Chinese, there are, especially in Cochin-China, a great many Sino-Annamites, called Minh-huong, numbering about 80,000 individuals.



PLATE 14

Upper: Annamite women weaving straw mats. Region of Chau-Rê, near Phan-rang, southern Annam.

Lower: Annamite women on their way to the market, Dong-son village, Thanh-hoa Province, northern Annam. The woman in the center is carrying a load of paper imitations of gold ingots, used for sacrifices to the spirits.

Photographs by the author.







PLATE 15

Upper: Annamite burial procession, town of Thanh-hoa, northern Annam.

Lower: Cambodian Buddhist monks with lemon-yellow togalike cloaks and shaved heads. Som-rong-sen Monastery near Tonlé Sap, or Great Lake, in central Cambodia.

Photographs by the author.







PLATE 16

Upper: Cambodian girls of the Royal Ballet, performing in the ruins of Angkor. Courtesy National Geographic Society.

Lower: Ruins of the Cham temple of Po Nagar, at Nha-trang, southern Annam. The monuments have in recent years been restored under the auspices of the École Française d'Extrême-Orient. Photograph by the author.





PLATE 17

Left: The headman  
of the Cham village  
near "Tour Cham,"  
southern Annam. Pho-  
tograph by the author.

Right: Cham wo-  
men from southern  
Annam. Courtesy Mr.  
Huong Ky, Hanoi.





## ASIATIC MINORITIES OTHER THAN CHINESE

## THE MALAYS

There is a small minority designated as Malays, said to number about 60,000 people, who have immigrated to southern Indochina in recent times. Most of them are scattered in Cambodia (Kompongcham, Lovèk, Kompong-Luong) and in Cochin-China (Saigon-Cholon area, Chaudoc, and Tay-ninh). Physically they resemble their kinsmen in the Malay Peninsula and in the East Indies, and dress in the same manner, wearing the sarong and fez. They live in stilt dwellings, which can be distinguished from those of the other inhabitants by the fact that the screens of the women's rooms are attached by the lower edge, not by the upper. This arrangement is intended to protect the women from indiscreet observation from the outside.

They gain their livelihood chiefly as fishermen and small merchants. In some villages the making of batik shawls is a specialty.

Like the Cham of the Bani sect, the Malays are Muslims, but are more devout than the former. The Malays observe Ramadhan, practice circumcision, and avoid eating pork and drinking fermented beverages.

## THE INDIANS

There are about 6,000 or 7,000 Indians in Indochina, most of them living probably in the Saigon region. They have arrived in recent years and are often referred to as Malabars. A great many from the French possessions in India, especially Pondichéry, were in earlier days encouraged to immigrate for political reasons. They are French citizens. Others, being British subjects, are chiefly from Bombay or the Coromandel Coast.

The Indians are known to be intelligent and industrious. Most of them earn their livelihood as employees or as small merchants, especially in the textile business. Others called Chetty or Chettyar, mainly Brahmanists from Madras or the Coromandel, are moneylenders. A great many of the Indians are either Catholics or Muslims.

## THE JAPANESE

Before the outbreak of the war there were only a few hundred Japanese scattered throughout the confederacy, mostly small shopkeepers and employees of Japanese firms, probably also engaged in various espionage activities. Since Tokyo forced Indochina into their "co-prosperity sphere," Japanese immigrants are being rushed into the country, especially shopkeepers and employees. This settlement is, of course, of a temporary character.



The number of Asiatics of nationalities other than those mentioned here is insignificant.

#### MOUNTAIN TRIBES

There is in Indochina a congeries of primitive mountain tribes, partly nomadic, partly settled. Their social and religious structure is based chiefly on rice culture. It is possible to distinguish two main groups, the northern and the southern.

The *northern group*, numbering possibly about a million and a half individuals, comprises a great many peoples, such as the Thai, Muong, Man, Meo, etc., who in historic times arrived in Tonkin and upper Laos from their original homeland, southwestern China. During the last few centuries there has been a constant, mainly pacific, infiltration tending to reach farther southward.

The social organization of these tribes is of feudal character, and the various groups are ruled by hereditary lords chosen generally from within a particular family. The family system is based on the paternal hierarchy. Their language belongs to the so-called variatonic group. Most of these tribes live in Tonkin and northern Annam, but some of them have pushed southward into Laos and Siam.

The *southern group*, numbering a little more than a million individuals, comprising the real aborigines of the country, the Indonesians, also referred to as proto-Malays, Moï, Phnong, Kha, etc., belong linguistically to the monotonic group. Their social organization is of an anarchic type, except in cases where they have been subjected to strong influences by more civilized neighbors. Religion is the affair of the individual or of the family, not of the group.

Two subdivisions of the southern group can be distinguished: (a) tribes related to the Chams (cf. p. 15), such as the Jarai and the Radhé, whose social structure is based on the matriarchate (name and property transmitted by the mother); (b) tribes partly related to the Cambodians (Bih or Pi, Stieng, etc.), and the Bahnar, Sedang, Rungao, etc., whose social structure is based on the patriarchate (name and property transmitted by the father).

#### NORTHERN MOUNTAIN TRIBES

##### THE THAI GROUP

The most important numerically and the most influential from a political point of view of these northern groups are the Thai, comprising possibly three-quarters of all the mountain tribes in northern Indochina.

The term "Thai" is applied to a great many peoples living also outside the confederacy,<sup>3</sup> scattered over a large area in southwestern China. They generally occupy the fertile valley bottoms in the interior.

Though there are considerable variations among the Thai from a physical point of view, possibly due to intermarriage with neighboring people, they are of relatively large stature (average height, 5 ft. 6 in.). The Thai have a light brown skin, are subbrachycephalic (index 82.5), and do not have slanting eyes. They have vigorous constitutions and are excellent mountain climbers.

The men have now generally adopted the Annamite costume, but in some tribes they use a blue cotton jacket. The women have preserved their peculiar dress, distinctive for each subgroup. Thus, for example, the "White Thai" and the "Black Thai" wear a long skirt and a tight-fitting jacket buttoned in front, white among the former, black among the latter.

The houses are often built on piles, sometimes oriented in the same direction as nearby streams or rivers. There are communities of up to about 50 houses, but seldom more.

The Thai grow rice, maize, sesame, batata, sugarcane, cotton, mulberries, and other lesser crops. Their industry, entirely domestic, is little developed and, generally speaking, is limited to the preparation of indigo for dyeing of textiles, processing of vegetable oil and sugar, weaving, and basketwork.

The Thai are known to be indolent, taking great pleasure in music, chants, and games. They are very superstitious and have preserved a great many picturesque and romantic customs of religious character which are particularly interesting from an anthropological point of view because of their elaborate and archaic character. Studies of their customs have shed new light on the pre-Confucian civilization in China.

As previously mentioned, the Thai are divided into a great many subgroups, the most important of which will be enumerated below.

*The Thô.*—This term in Annamite, meaning "men of the soil," refers to their agricultural activities. This tribe is one of the most numerous among the Thai in upper Tonkin. Owing to long and close contact with their more advanced neighbors, Chinese and Annamites, they have been strongly subjected to the influence of these peoples.

*The Nhang or Gai,* called Cha jen by the Chinese and Yang by the Laotians, closely related to the Thô and the Nung, are also numerous in upper Tonkin (about 10,000 people) especially in the valleys of the Claire River, Song-Chay, and on the right bank of the Red River.

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<sup>3</sup> Since 1939 the Siamese, partly of Thai ancestry, refer to themselves as Thai and to Siam as Thailand.

The Nhang have their houses built on the mountain slopes, either on piles or directly on the soil. They have adopted several Chinese customs, are known to be rather intelligent, and have furnished valuable units to the French armed forces.

*The "White Thai,"* or Thai khao, also kindred to the Thô, are settled especially in the following regions in upper Tonkin: The valley of the Red River, the upper part of the Black River valley and around its tributaries, and between Lai Chau and Phong To. Their language is similar to the Laotian.

*The "Black Thai,"* or Thai dam, less influenced by their neighbors than other Thai tribes, have preserved a great many archaic customs, as for example the love courts also characteristic of the Laotians. Their communities, comprising stilt houses, are often situated at a relatively high altitude.

The "Black Thai" are encountered chiefly in the following regions of upper Tonkin: Ha-giang, Pak-ha, Hoang-su-phi, Binh Lu, and Phong To. They are particularly numerous on the so-called Sip Song Chau Tai territory between the Black River and the right bank of the Red River.

*The Tai Nua.*—This group, numbering about 22,000 individuals, is encountered in the Sam Nua region, province of Hua-Panh, in northeastern Laos. They are closely related to the Laotians. The women wear an attractive skirt similar to the Laotian *sin*, and a short jacket in various colors provided with heavy silver buttons. The headgear consists of a cap worn inclined to the left.

*The Lu.*—The Lu, also kindred to the Laotians and, like the latter, Buddhists, are settled especially in upper Laos in the Muong Son region as well as in the vicinity of Lai Chau and Phong To in upper Tonkin.

In addition to the above tribes there is a small minority of about 1,500 Thai in Battambang Province in western Cambodia in the Phai-lin district. They immigrated around 1875 from the Burmese Shan states. They are called Pégouans, Phuméa, or Kaûla. Their main occupation is the extraction of precious stones found in the region. They are Buddhists.

#### THE MUONG

The term "Muong," of Thai origin, means soil or territory, and is used by extension to designate the inhabitants of various feudal communities in upper Tonkin and northern Annam, bordering the delta (inhabited by the Annamites). They number about 220,000 individuals.

From a social point of view the Muong are to be classified in the Thai group, but their language presents striking similarities to the Annamite





PLATE 18

Left: Woman of  
the "White Thai"  
group, upper Tonkin.

Right: Partisans of  
the Thô group, upper  
Tonkin.

Courtesy Mr. Huong  
Ky, Hanoi.





# PLATE 19

Left: Sorcerers of the Man tien group wearing blue tunics and a curious head-gear in the shape of a cock's crest. The cymbals are used to accompany the ritual dances which the sorcerers perform. They belong to an influential guild, which may extend its ramifications into China and Tibet. Region of Nguyen-binh, upper Tonkin.

Right: Women from Nguyen-binh, upper Tonkin. The two at the right are from the Man tien tribe, the one at the left is a Meo.

Photographs by the author.





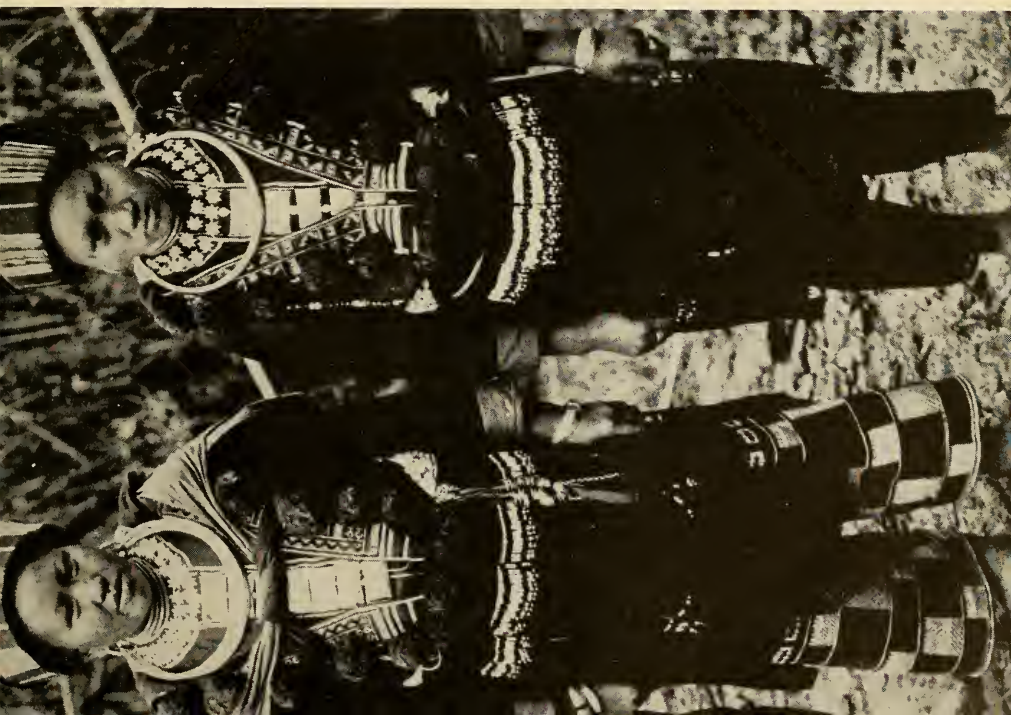


PLATE 20

Left: Women of the Man coc tribe, region of Tinh-tuc, upper Tonkin. Like their sisters of other Man tribes, they carry a heavy burden of silver appliques.

Right: Woman of the Man ta pan group, region of Ha-giang, upper Tonkin.

Courtesy Mr. Huong Ky, Hanoi.







PLATE 21

Left: Women of the Man son dau group ("à tête lacquée"), region of Hoa-binh, upper Tonkin.

Right: Women of the Man lan tien group, upper Tonkin. Courtesy Mr. Huong Ky, Hanoi.



and is sometimes referred to as an archaic form of that tongue. These similarities may be due to cultural penetration. Also from a physical point of view the two groups present close resemblances.

The costume of the men is of the Annamite pattern, but instead of being brown it is indigo blue. The women wear a long skirt folded so as to cover the breast, and a piece of cloth, like a bib, fitting closely to the neck. In addition, there is a short white jacket provided with tight-fitting sleeves.

The Muong are farmers, growing chiefly rice, maize, and manioc. They also utilize various forest products. Their houses are built on stilts.

#### THE MAN

The term "Man" was originally applied by the Chinese to all hill tribes in southern China, who were looked upon by them as barbarians. At present the French use the word "Man" to designate the same kind of hill tribes that the Chinese call Yao. The Man call themselves Kim-mien, "people from the mountains."

The original homeland of the Man is central and southern China, particularly the provinces of Hunan, Hupeh, Kwangsi, and Kweichow, where a great many Man tribes are still living. Their southward movement to northern Indochina may have taken place as early as the thirteenth century, if not earlier. On their arrival they probably found the fertile valley bottoms already occupied by the Thai and the Muong and had therefore to content themselves with the less productive soil on the mountain slopes. Today they are found scattered at altitudes ranging from about 1,000 to 3,000 feet above sea level.

At present there are more than 50,000 Man in northern Indochina, chiefly centering around Nguyen-binh, Bao-lac, and Bac-kan. In spite of common customs and a feeling of solidarity, the Man are split into several groups, the most important of which are the Man coc, also called Ta pan Man (Man ta pan), Man Sung or Man son dau, and the Man (deo) tien or Siao pan Man (Man pan siao). Other tribes are the Man lan tien or Man Cham, Man quan trang, Man quan coc, Man xanh y, etc.

The Man are of medium stature and muscular, are excellent mountain climbers, industrious, intelligent, and hospitable. The men dress generally like the Chinese. The women, very coquettish, have elaborately embroidered and colorful dresses, sometimes covered with heavy silver appliques. Some of them, as the Man tien, wear skirts. The women of the Man coc tribe wear trousers adorned with a checkerboard pattern.

The Man are generally described as nomads or seminomads, but at



present they have a tendency to settle as farmers and raise chiefly rice, maize, batatas, beans, tobacco, and cotton. They distill rice and maize. They utilize such forest products as roots, bark, wax, wild honey, and camphor, and have a little-developed domestic iron and paper industry.

A few of the Man know how to write and read Chinese or French. The women have a privileged position, and in spite of the fact that polygamy is permitted, it is limited in practice.

Their houses are not on stilts, but built directly on the soil. The communities seldom comprise more than five or six huts. Religious beliefs comprise a mixture of animism, ancestor worship, Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The most powerful of the spirits are those of the waters, the sky, and the mountains. The sorcerers apparently form a very influential guild, extending its ramifications into China.

The Man have furnished the French armed forces with valuable "partisans" or militiamen, used since 1889 to suppress banditry and to serve as border guards. The "partisans" are generally chosen by the native authorities from among the more well-to-do families. The military administration entrusts to each one of the "partisans" a rifle and ammunition.

#### THE MEO

The term "Meo" refers to tribes that have entered northern Indochina in the last few centuries. Their original homeland is the high plateau of southern China, still inhabited by several Meo groups located especially in the provinces of Yunnan, Szechwan, and Kweichow. These tribes designate themselves by the term "Hmong," "Mong," or "Mlong." The latter word has become Miao or Miaotze in Chinese, from which derives the Sino-Annamite term "Meo," now used by the French.

Today there are more than 40,000 Meo in upper Tonkin, living mainly along the China border. In addition there is an important group comprising 20,000 people on the Tran-ninh plateau in northern Laos. As the Meo, upon their arrival, found the fertile soil of the valley bottoms occupied by the Thai, and the lower mountain slopes inhabited by the Man (up to an altitude of about 3,000 feet), they had to content themselves with the steep higher slopes at an altitude of between 3,000 and 4,500 feet.

The Meo are of rather small stature and often of pronounced Mongoloid type. The men generally have adopted the Chinese costume, but the women keep to their peculiar dress comprising a folded white skirt and a short jacket with tight-fitting sleeves and large, elaborately embroidered, colorful "sailor" collar. The legs are often protected by



puttees. There are a great many subgroups, designated according to the color of the women's dress as red, white, black, or flowering Meo.

The Meo are very individualistic and live in isolated cottages, seldom more than three or four together, built directly on the soil. They are seminomadic and earn their livelihood by primitive farming (growing rice, and poppies for opium processing), and keep fowl, hogs, and horses. They practice the *ray* or forest clearing,<sup>4</sup> a primitive jungle agriculture which has had disastrous consequences in the gradual deforestation of the country and is now being curtailed through the intervention of the French administration. To some of the Meo families the growing of poppies has been a relatively beneficial business. As a matter of fact, the growing of this plant is most successful at the very altitude where the Meo have settled, i.e., between 3,000 and 4,500 feet. Attempts have been made in recent years by the Government General to restrict the area of the poppy fields and the practice of opium smoking.

The Meo are supposed to be little concerned with religious affairs. Their beliefs are a mixture of Buddhistic ideas, Taoism, ancestor worship, and worship of spirits.

In addition to the tribes listed above, there are in northern Indochina a few others, as for example the Lolos, who immigrated in recent times from China, but they are, from a numerical or political point of view, of little importance.

#### THE SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN GROUP

This group, comprising the least advanced of all tribes in Indochina, are generally referred to as Indonesians, proto-Malays, or Moï. The latter term is of Annamite origin, meaning "savage." They are called Kha by the Laotians and Phnong by the Cambodians, both terms having the same meaning as Moï. In this paper we shall refer to them by the term "Indonesians." Their present homeland is southern and central Annam, eastern Cochin-China, central Laos, and northern and eastern Cambodia.

The Indonesians are generally of medium stature, dolicocephalic, and brown-skinned. They have flat noses, straight or slightly wavy hair, and eyes that are not slanting. The body is symmetrical and muscular. Beards and moustaches are generally absent. The teeth are often filed and the ear lobes distorted by plugs of bone or ivory, or by heavy brass rings.

<sup>4</sup> These clearings are made by felling all growth, which is subsequently reduced to ashes by fire. The ashes produce a good fertilizer for a year or two, during which time rich crops can be gathered. However, after such a period the soil becomes almost sterile and is abandoned to grass vegetation and secondary growth for another *ray*.

The costume of both sexes is generally reduced to a minimum, consisting only of an apron or "cache-sexe." In some tribes, however, as for example the Radhé, the men use on certain occasions a short blue jacket ornamented with red braid. The women wear a long skirt, but have the shoulders and breasts uncovered. The hairdress varies considerably from one tribe to another. The turban is the most common headgear.

The Indonesians live in houses built on stilts and provided with thatched roofs. These houses generally shelter several related households and are sometimes of considerable length, occasionally as much as 1,000 feet.

The Indonesians earn their livelihood by hunting and by primitive farming. The Mnong in the Badon region, west of Ban-méthuot in central Annam, have been particularly famous as elephant hunters. The capturing and domestication of young elephants has become an important source of income for this tribe.

The main crop is rice, but in addition the Indonesians grow tobacco, sesame, and a kind of millet which is fermented to produce alcohol used in ritual libations. In addition to their activities as hunters and farmers the Indonesians collect some forest products. Their domestic industry is limited chiefly to weaving and making of baskets, crossbows, bamboo tools, and similar articles.

The Indonesians are very superstitious and live in constant fear of vindictive spirits. Like most other primitive peoples, they are animists and worship the forces of nature, such as the soil, the thunder, and the water.

As previously mentioned (p. 20), there are among the Indonesians numerous tribes whose customs and social structure differ considerably. Among the most developed and numerically most important are the Jarai and the Radhé, who in ancient times were subjected to the impact of the higher Cham civilization. Possibly as a result of this contact the Jarai and the Radhé speak a Cham dialect.

The Jarai live principally in Pleiku Province (about 100,000 individuals), and southwest of Kon-tum (about 20,000 individuals), and in the northern part of the Dar Lac region in central Annam.

Like the Cham they are divided into various clans named after plants, animals, or objects (for example, clan of the bamboo, of the rhinoceros, of the road, etc.). Their sorcerers, supposed to be invested with supernatural power, are particularly influential, especially those called the Sadet of Water and the Sadet of Fire.

The Radhé, regarded as the most intelligent of the Indonesian mountain tribes, live in the Dar Lac region in central Annam. There is a rather



PLATE 22

Left: Woman of  
the "White Meo",  
tribe, region of Ha-  
giang, upper Tonkin.

Right: "White  
Meo," region of  
Chapa, upper Tonkin.

Courtesy Mr. Huong  
Ky, Hanoi.







PLATE 23  
Beauties of the Lolo  
(Akha) tribe, upper  
Laos. Courtesy Mr.  
Huong Ky, Hanoi.





PLATE 24

Upper: Men and women of the Meo tribe. The men are playing the mouth organ (*kbène*) and stepping around to the tunes. Region of Cao-bang, upper Tonkin. Courtesy Mr. Huong Ky, Hanoi.

Lower: Indonesians between Dalat and Dankia (Haut Donnai), southern Annam, loaded with ceramic jars, commonly used in ritual libations. The Indonesians are eager to invest their savings in such jars. Photograph by the author.







PLATE 25

Upper: An Indonesian stilt hut at Ban-méthuot on the Dar Lac plateau, southern Annam. Owing to the fact that these dwellings are raised above the ground, they are relatively cool, and to a certain extent safe in case of flood. There are no chimneys. The smoke from the earthenware hearth fills the interior, thus chasing away or killing mosquitoes and other dreaded insects. The floor is made of bamboo lattices and straw mats. During the night pigs and poultry are kept in a cage beneath the floor.

Lower: An Indonesian family of the Pi or Bih group at Ban Tur, central Annam. The women extend the lobe of the ears by fixing heavy brass rings in them.

Photographs by the author.





considerable community at Ban-méthuot which has furnished to the French army a certain number of militiamen.

Among the groups related to the Cambodians, the most important are the Sedang, about 72,000 people, living on the Kon-tum plateau in central Annam; the Bih or Pi in the Ban Tur region, east of Ban-méthuot; the Stieng in the province of Thu Dau Mot in upper Cochín-China.

In addition to the above main tribes, there are numerous subgroups of less importance, such as the Lat, Koho, Cháu, Sorê, Chau Ma, Ma Bnom, Kil (or T'il, Chil, Kon N'ho, Churu), Raglai, Chau Ma (Che Ma), Kha Tahoi, and others.

In recent years the French administration has made a great effort to civilize these backward tribes and encourage them to abandon their nomadic life and settle as farmers and cattle breeders. Some have been converted to Christianity by French and American missionaries.

#### CONCLUSION

The recent events in East Asia have brought French Indochina into the limelight. Because of its important geographical and strategic position—temporarily serving the Japanese as the hub of their military operations in southeast Asia—Indochina will undoubtedly play a most important part in this theater of war. For this reason alone the country and its little-known populations are worthy of study.

Since time immemorial the Indochinese peninsula has been a crossroads of peoples and cultural currents. At present the Indochinese Union has become, under French rule, a meeting place between east and west. While paying an increasing respect to the local customs, justice, and traditions, the French have brought new life into the lethargic civilizations belonging to an era which is now dead and gone, and have guided the natives into the path of human progress. This important process is still going on, though hampered temporarily by the war and the Japanese occupation, and will most certainly receive a new impetus once the territory has been liberated from its enemies. The Algiers Committee of National Liberation, trustee of French interests, has already promised the peoples of Indochina, in recognition of their support and loyalty to France, a new post-war status, aiming toward their gradual emancipation within the framework of the French empire.

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